DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 859 TM 011 425

AUTHOR Redfield, Doris L.; Craig, James R.
TITLE Parents and Students as Stakeholders in the Teacher Evaluation Process.
PUB DATE Apr 88
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 5-9, 1988). For a related document, see TM 011 426.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Evaluation Methods; High School Students; Interviews; *Parent Attitudes; Parent Role; Student Attitudes; *Student Evaluation of Teacher Performance; Student Role; *Teacher Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS Kentucky Career Ladder Plan; Stakeholders

ABSTRACT

Perspectives of students and parents in their roles as stakeholders in the teacher evaluation process were determined. In conjunction with the Expected Student Achievement (ESA) project of the Kentucky Career Ladder Commission, interviews were conducted with 23 parents and 59 high school students using a modified Focus Group Interview technique. Results of the interviews were similar to those yielded by interviews with teachers and principals. Parents and students generally agreed on the need to: (1) evaluate teachers; (2) consider student achievement; (3) define achievement broadly enough to include more than academics; (4) consider multiple types of data; (5) consider individual differences; (6) consider teachers' records; and (7) provide feedback. Both parents and students recognized the need for fair teacher evaluation and adequate definition of the problem. (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED293859

Parents and Students as Stakeholders in the Teacher Evaluation Process

Doris L. Redfield* and James R. Craig

Western Kentucky University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

DORIS L. REDFIELD

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Running Head: Parents/Students

Paper presented in D.L. Redfield (Chair). Using Student Outcomes to Evaluate Teaching: Perspectives and Policy Implications, 1988 Annual Meetings of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

* D.L. Redfield is on leave from Western Kentucky University to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). No official support or endorsement of this work by the U.S. Department of Education is intended or should be inferred.

TM 011 425

Parents and Students as Stakeholders in the Teacher Evaluation Process

Doris L.Redfield and James R. Craig

Introduction

The role of student achievement in the evaluation of any educational endeavor is controversial. The public and publicly supported politicians demand that the teaching profession be held accountable for students' achievements (or lack thereof). At the same time, professional educators protest the unfairness of accountability systems based upon the misuse of student achievement data. The purpose of this paper is to address the perspectives of parents and students in their roles as stakeholders in the teacher evaluation process.

We became aware of a need to consider the perspectives of parents and students as a result of our experience with Kentucky's Career Ladder Pilot Study. During the 1986-87 school year, Kentucky piloted several teacher evaluation instruments for possible use in its proposed Career Ladder Plan (Kentucky Career Ladder Committee, 1985). Concomitantly, a special project on "expected student achievement" (ESA) was conducted to: (a) satisfy the mandate to include student achievement in the Kentucky Career Ladder Plan and (b) to avoid the indefensible/inappropriate use of standardized achievement test scores in the evaluation of teachers. Pertinent aspects of the ESA project are briefly described in the next paragraph; details are provided elsewhere (Kentucky Career Ladder Commission,1987a,

1988; Redfield, 1987a, 1987b, 1988; Redfield & Craig, 1987a, 1987b).

Participants in the ESA project included 26 teachers representing a wide variety of grade levels (K - 12), subject matter areas (e.g., basic skills, arts, business, P.E.), and students (e.g., gifted, handicapped). Midway through the project year, in light of their experience to date, participants were interviewed concerning their perceptions of the issues surrounding the use of student achievement data in teacher evaluation. A modified Focus Froup Interview (FGI) technique, as summarized in the Methods section of this paper, was used. Throughout the interviews, teacher participants expressed a need to broadly define "achievement." In fact, in considering student outcomes they regarded as uniquely attributable to themselves, these teachers were more concerned with nonacademic, compared to academic, outcomes (e.g., behaviors, affects, skills, attitudes). They were uncertain as to how those outcomes might be fairly incorporated into a teacher evaluation system; but, in general, they felt that such outcomes could be fairly considered given a collegial relationship with a knowledgeable, evaluating supervisor.

To verify the perceptions of the teachers participating in the ESA project, additional interviews were conducted with groups of parents, students, and individual principals. Briefly, the data were confirmatory in nature. For example, all interview groups clearly voiced a need to broadly define achievement.

Findings across teacher participants in the ESA project, their principals, parents, and students gave rise to the idea for

this symposium. Our original intent was to include spokespersons from national organizations who might have a position or perspective concerning the problems of using student achievement data in teacher evaluation systems. The participation of a number of (anonymous) organizations representing parents and/or students was invited. They each expressed interest in and concern about the issue at hand. They also indicated that while they could make statements about student "testing," teacher evaluation, and/or parents'/students' needs and rights, they had not yet adequately explored the link between student "testing" and teacher evaluation. For example, the National Parent Teacher Association's (PTA's) Position Statement on Testing (National PTA, 1977, 1981, 1987) is that:

> . . . testing should be used to improve the education of children. Therefore, all testing regulations and requirements must recognize the need for maximum state and local control regarding the determination of tests to be given and the appropriate uses for the resulting data. Testing regulations must recognize the legitimate rights of parents and students. Valid testing of achievement must be based on what has been taught and must be recognized as only one part of the process of measuring achievement. . . .

Some organizations (e.g., National Coalition of Advocates for Students) referred us to individuals who are knowledgeable advocates and who might comment on a particular practice occurring within their constituency. However, the only data base we could identify was the information we had collected in conjunction with the ESA project. Still believing the importance of representing the perspectives of parent and student stakeholders, we decided to present our limited findings and their implications for future research, development, and practice.

Methods

A modified Focus Group Interview (FGI) technique was used to interview groups of parents and students. Briefly, the FGI technique (Krueger, 1986) is a group interview procedure originally designed for collecting marketing information from consumers. Groups of 8 - 12 individuals are interviewed for approximately 90 minutes concerning their feelings about, and perceptions of, various products and/or services. The interviews are structured and repeated with a number of groups until a consistent pattern of responses across groups is apparent. Each interviewer is assisted by a backup interviewer. Following the interview, the interviewer and backup collaborate to summarize the general ideas expressed by the group.

Student Interviews

Krueger's (1986) technique was modified (see Craig & Redfield, 1987; Redfield, 1987a) and used to interview six groups of students. Groups, ranging in size from 6 to 14 individuals (total n = 59), were interviewed by the ESA Project director. Interviews were scheduled to last approximately 30 minutes. Western Kentucky University (WKU) graduate students or faculty, trained in the modified FGI technique, functioned as backup interviewers. Because high school seniors would be able to speak from the most educational experience, by design, most of the students interviewed were seniors (n = 37). The groups were selected to be representative of their particular schools. Since the group meetings were arranged by various teachers, principals, and instructional supervisors, some groups may have been more representative of a particular school than others.

Parent Interviews

Three groups of parents, with groups ranging in size from six to nine individuals (total n = 23), were interviewed by the ESA Project Director and backup interviewers. The parents represented children ranging from preschool to college age. The scripted interview questions paralleled those asked of the student groups.

Results

Student Interviews

Question: "What have you learned because of any one particular teacher?" The intent of this question was to address the issue of what student outcomes might be reasonably and fairly attributed to a particular teacher (as opposed to a collection of teachers or some other person or phenomenon such as an event, ability, or experience). Students' responses focused on affects and attitudes (e.g., motivation to learn, responsibility, self-confidence, independence). The heaviest emphases were on the importance of working hard, motivation, and thinking. Except for one group, the interviewer had to probe to get any responses related to academic outcomes. Every group had to be probed for responses concerning negative (compared to positive) outcomes. Such probing led to the overall impression that when teachers appear not to care and/or they do not have the respect of the students and/or they do not maintain discipline, learning does not occur. In short, the students stressed the importance of a teacher's: (a) caring about his/her content area and students and (b) maintaining a well-disciplined.

Question: "How can people tell by being around you or by

your performance that you have been in the classes of certain teachers?" The purpose of this question was to obtain information about how noneducators might operationalize student "achievement." Here, students primarily focused on observable behaviors and skills (e.g., what I say/talk about, what I know that only that teacher teaches such as computer skills, the way I organize my notebook, the books/materials I carry, behaviors or speech patterns that I imitate). Secondary focus was on affects and attitudes (e.g., enthusiasm for a subject taught by a particular teacher). The importance of a "relaxed" classroom atmosphere was emphasized. The interviewer had to probe for responses concerning specific academic skills. This finding is particularly interesting because when teacher participants in the ESA project were asked about student outcomes uniquely attributable to themselves, they focused on specific academic skills.

Question: "To what extent should teachers be evaluated using their students' achievement test scores?" The fact that a state mandate for annual administration of an essential skills test (the Kentucky Essential Skills Test) was in effect may provide a pertinent context for students' responses to this question. All but one student, across all groups, said that achievement test scores should not be used to evaluate teachers for a variety of reasons including: seniors, especially, don't care about the tests -- the scores don't affect grades, college, or graduation; many students perceive the tests as a joke, having memorized many of the questions and answers; the tests are narrow in scope and limit what some teachers teach; factors over which

teachers have little control can affect scores (e.g., students having an "off day," bad attitudes, ability); the testing atmosphere is not "real" compared to the regular class environment. Students seemed particularly concerned that some poor teachers may have bright students who "look good on test scores" while some good teachers may not have time to cover all of the material on the test. Despite their reservations about using student test scores to evaluate teachers, the students agreed that teachers should be evaluated.

Question: "If students' scores on standardized achievement tests provide inadequate measures of teacher effectiveness, then what else might be considered?" The most prevalent responses centered on classroom observation and opinion surveys. The idea that classroom observations should be unannounced and cover extended periods of time prevailed. Students thought that observers should watch for teacher enthusiasm, teacher organization, and the ability of the teacher to make students feel comfortable/relaxed. They felt that students should be observed for involvement (e.g., level of interest, attention, preparation, asking/answering questions). These students wanted more from teachers than facts, including a pleasant social climate.

Overall, the students wanted to be surveyed or interviewed concerning their teachers. They perceived that the primary value of these surveys or interviews would be to provide teachers and principals with feedback for improvement. Suggestions other than classroom observations and student evaluations of teachers included: interviewing other teachers (colleagues), follow-up on

graduated students to see if they are successful in "real life," pre and posttest students, used standardized tests that students take seriously (e.g., ACT, SAT, Advanced Placement), test teachers to be sure they are knowledgeable and up-to-date in their subject matter areas, and interview teachers to assess the degree to which they care about their students and what they teach.

Parent Interviews

Question: "What are some of the things you have learned that you are fairly certain you learned from your school experiences?" With few exceptions parents recalled positive school learning experiences centering on nonacademics (e.g., feelings of self-confidence, sense of curiosity, healthy skeptism of presented material, importance of trying/working hard, organization, neatness, self-discipline). Only two of the 23 parents mentioned specific, academic outcomes (i.e., facts and how to solve certain kinds of math problems) and only one parent recalled a "negative" outcome (i.e., learning that he/she did not like "screaming" teachers). Without being asked, parents volunteered that the teacher behaviors contributing to the outcomes they recalled included personal interest and encouragement.

Question: "What have your children learned as a result of being in school, or more specifically, because of being in any one particular teacher's class?" Again, responses focused on nonacademic outcomes (e.g., curiosity, self-confidence, to try hard, to have high expectations, punctuality, self-discipline). Even with probing, only one specific, academic outcome was

mentioned (i.e., learning to use the associative property of addition). Three negative outcomes were elicited, an example being "learning to act different in different teachers' classes. The negative outcome statements did not all come from the same group.

Question: "To what extent should teachers be evaluated on the basis of their students' achievement test scores?" The overall concensus was that teachers should be evaluated but not solely on the basis of test scores for a number of reasons: some teachers are in unfortunate circumstances, students move during the year, some students don't test well, the tests are the same year after year so they don't validly measure what was taught in a particular class or grade. There was general agreement that test scores should probably be looked at in light of a teacher's track record and that other variables outside the teacher's control (e.g., ability, student anxiety) should be taken into account. Perceptions regarding specific advantages vs. disadvantages of Kentucky's mandated essential skills test were voiced (e.g., at least poor teachers must teach the skills to be tested vs. some teachers teach the test and neglect other important teaching).

Question: "If students' scores on standardized achievement tests provide inadequate measures of teacher effectiveness, then what else might be considered?" Suggestions basically reinforced the notion that multiple sources of data collected over a considerable period of time should be used. Parents were also concerned that teachers receive feedback that would allow them to improve instruction before the end of the school year. The ideas

and suggestions offered primarily concerned evaluations by students, parents, office staff, and/or other teachers; and, classroom observations to see how teachers interact with students (e.g., with enthusiasm, excitement, empathy). Parents did voice a recognition that the procedures used would have to be logistically manageable.

Discussion

Results of the Student and Parent FGIs were similar to those yielded by interviews with ESA teacher participants and their principals (Kentucky Career Ladder Commission, 1987a, 1988; Redfield, 1987a). Given the potentially limited generalizability of results based on relatively few interview groups, it is apparent that the "conventional wisdom" expressed by the interviewed parents and students is in line with the concerns of technical and policy experts. For example, issues raised by students and/or parents included: (a) the need to evaluate teachers; (b) the need to consider student achievement in the evaluation of teachers; (c) the need to broadly define student achievement to include important learning outcomes other than basic academic skills; (d) the need to consider multiple types of data when evaluating teachers -- including, but not limited to, a variety of student outcome measures (e.g., classroom observation, parent/student/colleague evaluations); (e) the need to consider individual student differences and other factors over which teachers have no direct control; (f) the need to consider teachers' track records when interpreting evaluation data; and (g) the need to provide teachers with evaluative feedback so that they might improve.

These findings, particularly if their generalizability is established, are important and cannot be ignored by responsible policymakers. The data suggest that the public is not "hung up" on test scores, would certainly consider the potential of alternative teacher evaluation procedures, and is interested in formative procedures that would enhance the development of teachers.

In sum, the students and parents interviewed in conjunction with the ESA project expressed the importance of including student achievement data in teacher evaluation processes. They were also careful to qualify their perspectives. It was important to them that teacher evaluation data be used fairly, with respect to both teachers and students, and that it be used to improve the condition of education.

Many of the concerns expressed throughout the FGIs are technically addressable. For example, the concern that achievement be broadly defined implies the need for multiple achievement measures; the technical expertise for developing measures in areas other than basic skills now exits. The concern that extraneous factors outside teachers' direct control be accounted for is now statistically and technically manageable provided that the factors are identified and operationalized. The technology for tracking records of teacher performance is now in place in many building, district, and state level sites. Evaluation systems have been, are being, and can be developed for a variety of audiences (e.g., national, state, local), for summative and/or accountability purposes, and for formative and/or professional growth purposes.

Given the availability of the technical mechanisms for addressing many of the issues of concern, what is the problem? Perhaps the nature of the problem is not so much technical as it is conceptual. Before even the most sophisticated technological expertise can be efficiently and effectively applied to a problem, the problem must be defined. We have not yet defined either achievement or effective teaching. However, the appropriate identification and development of criterion measures for inclusion in any teacher evaluation system must rest on those definitions. We may find that some aspects of our evolving definitions may be universally applied and that others may require local, or even individual, consideration. We may also find that the notion of accountability applies to some aspects of our definitions while the notion of formative evaluation for improvement applies to others; hence, systems that can accommodate multiple evaluation purposes seem warranted.

So . . . what next? Why not proceed to apply our technical wisdom to the validation of components and systems that match with conventional wisdom as voiced by parent and student stakeholders in the teacher evaluation process? Perhaps because, in more instances than we care to admit, we have demonstrated our technical knowledge rather than wisdom.

References

Craig, J.R., & Redfield, D.L. (1987, October). Using a modified Focus Group Interview process to evaluate a project and to increase the perceived veracity of the evaluation report, paper presentation, Annual Meetings of the American Evaluation Association, Boston, MA.

Kentucky Career Ladder Commission (1987a). Technical Report: Special Project on Expected Student Achievement. Available from D.L. Redfield, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Research, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W./Room 606-C, Washington, D.C. 20208.

Kentucky Career Ladder Commission (1987b). Summary Report on the 1986-87 pilot program. Available from J.R. Craig, College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY 42101.

Kentucky Career Ladder Commission (1988). Research Report: Kentucky Career Ladder Pilot Study. Available from J.R. Craig, College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY 42101.

Kentucky Career Ladder Committee (1985). Report of Kentucky Career Ladder Committee: Kentucky Career Ladder Plan for Teachers ("Bluebook"). Available from R.S. Pankratz, College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY 42101.

Krueger, R.A. (1986). Focus Group Interviewing: Step by step instructions. Available from R.A. Krueger, Division of Agriculture Education, Department of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN.

National PTA. (1987). Position Statement on Testing. Available from the National PTA, Office of Governmental Relations, 1201 16th St., N.W./Room 621, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Redfield, D.L. (1987a, November). A comparison of the perspectives of teachers, students, parents, and principals concerning the influences of teaching on students and the use of student outcomes to evaluate teaching, paper presentation, Annual Meetings of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Mobile, AL.

Redfield, D.L. (1987b, November). Expected student achievement as a potential factor for assessing teacher effectiveness. In R.S. Pankratz (Symposium Organizer), The Assessment of Teacher Performance Using Classroom Observations, Structured Interviews, Goal Attainment and Expected Achievement: Lessons Learned, Annual Meetings of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Mobile, AL.

Redfield, D.L. (1988, April). Expected Student Achievement and the Evaluation of Teaching. In G. Galluzzo (Symposium Organizer), Instrumentation and Procedures for Evaluating Teachers for Professional Advancement: Development and Research, Annual Meetings of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Redfield, D.L., & Craig, J.R. (1987a, October). The use of pupil outcome measures in the assessment of teaching when reliance upon standardized test scores is not defensible, In D.L. Redfield (Symposium Organizer), Perspectives on the Use of Student Achievement Data in the Evaluation of Teaching, Annual Meetings of the American Evaluation Association Boston, MA.

Redfield, D.L., & Craig, J.R. (1987b, November). Identifying and documenting student outcomes for use in the evaluation of teachers when standardized achievement tests do not apply. In D.L. Redfield (Panel Organizer), The Hows and Whys of Using a Variety of Student Achievement Data to Assess the Effects of Teaching and Schooling: The State of the Mid-South Region, Annual Meetings of the Mid-South Educational Research Association.